



SUMMER SURVIVAL GUIDE- LESSON 1

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Lesson 1



Series: How to grow in your relationship with God this summer no matter what you face.



Lesson 1: Summer “To-Do” List



Bible Connection:
John 10:10 (NLT)



Bottom Line:
Decisions you make today shape who you will become tomorrow.

SUPPLIES

- One copy of the “Improv Scenarios” list for the leader.

OPENING GAME

IN-PERSON VERSION: QUESTIONS ONLY

GAME PREP

- Print (or be ready to read) the list of improv scenarios in the “Scenarios” file.
- Divide students into two groups and have them line up single-file, where the first people in each line are facing one another.
- Have a phone app/air horn/trumpet ready to zonk students who mess up during the game.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say,

- This is an improv game made popular by the TV show “Whose Line is it Anyway?”
- The first people in each line have to carry out a conversation using only questions.
- If you say a line that isn’t a question, or if you take too long to reply, I’ll zonk you, and you’ll have to go to the end of your line.
- If you’re next in line, step up and continue the conversation.
- Every few minutes, I give you a new scenario, but you’ll need to keep talking only in questions.

Ask if the first two in line are ready, give them the first scenario, then tell them, “Go!”

If a student takes too long or doesn’t speak in a question, zonk them and bring up the next student in line to continue. When the conversation starts to lag, give them a new scenario.

End the game before things get slow.

OPENING GAME

ONLINE VERSION: QUESTIONS ONLY

GAME PREP

Same as above, EXCEPT have the list of students who are online ready so you can call a new one once an old one gets zonked.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Same as above, EXCEPT call on students by name instead of breaking them into two teams.

TEACH

I love improv, and one of my favorite improv games is “Questions.”

I’m not very good at the game, but I LOVE asking questions.

Have you ever wondered things like:

- Is cereal a soup?
- Why isn’t “phonics” spelled the way it sounds?
- When you choke a Smurf, what color does it turn?
- How many chickens would it take to kill an elephant?

I LOVE those questions.

What are some silly questions you have?

[Give time for students to share. Laugh really hard at their responses, even if they’re not that funny.]

Those are great!

There’s another question-it’s not funny-but a LOT of people have asked it over the past 16 months: How do you keep moving forward when life gets crazy?

Do you remember March of last year?

All of us were moving along, living our lives when everything changed.

What were some of the hardest things you had to deal with through the quarantine?

[Give time for students to share. If a student mentions faith, segue into the message.]

Tonight, we're starting a new series called "Summer Survival Guide," where I'll be sharing 6 THINGS you can do to grow in your relationship with God, no matter what life throws at you.

In this series, we're talking specifically about how to survive the summer, but the stuff we're talking about really applies to our lives all the time.

The Bible has four books called gospels that tell a lot of the story of Jesus' life: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The verse we're rooting the whole series on is found in one of those gospels-John, chapter 10, verse 10.

In this passage, Jesus is talking to Jewish religious leaders who were always on Jesus' case about something.

He described Himself as a "good shepherd," protecting the people-"sheep"- from thieves and robbers.

Then he said, "The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."

I'm pretty sure everyone in this room wants to have a "rich and satisfying life," and that's exactly what God wants you to have.

Is anyone willing to take the challenge and memorize this verse?

If you do, I'll give you _____. [Figure out something reasonable for your group ... or just delete this line completely 😊.]

The reality is that life moves pretty fast, especially as a middle or high school student, and even the pandemic didn't change that.

Here's what we believe:

- You are moving in a direction.
- Your heart and your mind shape which direction you go.
- Your heart represents the things you want in life.
- Your mind represents what you believe life is all about.

Life never stands still, and your life doesn't stand still either!

You are moving somewhere all the time, whether you like it or not.

Maybe you've spent some time thinking about the direction of your life; you probably have some idea of where your life is headed. Maybe you haven't spent any time thinking about the direction of your life; you might not be super certain about where your life is headed.

Let's have some "mandatory fun time."

Turn to someone around you and answer the question, "What do you want out of life?"

[FOR ONLINE GROUPS, say: Let's have some "mandatory fun time." In the chat window, type in your answer to the question, "What do you want out of life?"]

[Give time for students to share.]

Now for a couple of harder questions:

- What are you doing to make those answers a reality?
- How are you helping yourself move in the direction you want your life to go?

You might not like to hear this, **but the decisions you make today shape who you'll become tomorrow.**

You'll hear that last part a lot because it's true, AND it's important.

Listen, it is totally OK for you to not yet know the exact direction of your life if you understand that your life IS moving in a direction, and there are some specific things that are shaping which direction you're moving.

One question you need to ask yourself is, "What (or Who) is in your heart?"

Most people begin dreaming about their future as soon as they're old enough to have thoughts.

- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- Where do you want to live?
- How many times will you defeat all the "bad guys" and be the hero?

All of these questions are answered by the things that are in your heart.

Your heart represents the things you want in life.

People try to chase a lot of different things in their lives, with mixed degrees of success.

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "not important at all" and 10 being "super important," rank each of the following things for you:

- Money
- Power
- Friendships
- Sex
- Popularity
- Success
- Feeling good
- Having fun
- Helping others
- God

If you allow your heart to chase after the wrong things, you will find yourself feeling empty and shallow, wondering why nothing seems to make you happy.

Everything on the list (except God) will give you some measure of temporary happiness; but the feeling doesn't last, because in the deepest places of your heart, you want love.

And you have to help your heart understand what it's really looking for.

Only God gives you the love that you're really looking for-the love that brings you a "rich and satisfying life."

Many people don't know what direction their life is going because they don't know what's in their hearts.

What (or who) shapes your heart?

In Luke chapter 6-another one of the "gospels" that tells about Jesus' life-we read that Jesus told the story of a good tree and a bad tree.

Would someone please read Luke 6:43 and 45 out loud for the group?

[I LOVE having students read from the Bible. If it doesn't work for your group, feel free to read it yourself or have another adult read it.]

43 [Jesus said,] A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. ... 45 A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart. Luke 6:43, 45 (NLT)

As you think about the things that influence your heart, which has the greatest effect?

- A person or group of people
- Images you see on social media or TV
- Lyrics from your favorite songs and artists
- Your relationship with Jesus?

What are the things, and who are the people that most shape your heart?

And a more important question, are you happy with the shape your heart is in? A second question you need to ask yourself is, "What (or Who) is in your mind?"

As you get older, you begin thinking about the deeper issues of life:

- Who am I?
- What is my purpose?
- Where do I belong?

The way you answer these questions reveals what's in your mind about the ultimate meaning of life.

Your mind represents what you believe life is really about.

If your mind is such an important part of your life and your future, shouldn't you give some thought to what (or who) influences your mind the most?

What (or who) shapes your mind?

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "hardly any" and 10 being "a lot," rank how much each of the following things influences your life:

- Family members
- BFFs
- Friends at school
- Boyfriends/girlfriends
- Celebrities
- Social media influencers
- Movies and TV shows
- Music lyrics
- Pastors
- God

As you think about the things that influence your mind, which has the greatest effect?

- A person or group of people
- Images you see on social media or TV
- Lyrics from your favorite songs and artists
- Your relationship with Jesus?

What are the things, and who are the people that most shape your mind?

And a more important question, are you happy with the shape your mind is in?

Maybe it's time to get focused.

When you take the time to do some honest evaluation about your heart and mind, you probably realize that there are some things that are shaping you that aren't all that great.

In fact, most of us would admit there are some things shaping us that are downright bad.

So, what do you do about it?

FIRST, reorient your heart towards Jesus.

The first step to resetting the direction of your life and getting focused on what is most important is to reorient your heart towards Jesus.

Depending on how much you've been involved in church throughout your life, this may be a familiar idea to you.

In some places it's called "getting saved" or "accepting Jesus into your heart."

In the third chapter of John—one of the books about Jesus—Jesus has a long conversation with a religious leader named Nicodemus and says several times, "You must be born again."

There's no magic formula to what this could look like; it's a shift of trust from your way to God's way.

When you make this shift for the first time and reorient your heart towards Jesus, you are set free from your old direction to live in a new direction.

The Bible also has some letters in it written by a guy named Paul.

Paul had a crazy experience that led to him following Jesus.

His faith led him to go all over the known world, telling people about Jesus.

He would stay in an area for a while, explain to the people what it meant to follow Jesus, then help them organize themselves as a church.

Paul hoped the followers of Jesus in an area would continue meeting together after he left town.

Oftentimes, he would hear stories about these places and send them letters of encouragement or correction.

One of those letters was to the church in Rome, and we have that letter in the Bible in the book called "Romans."

Would someone please read Romans 3:22-24 for us? [Again, if this doesn't work for your group, you (or another adult) can read it.]

22 We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. 23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. 24 Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. Romans 3:22-24 (NLT)

SECOND, allow God to reshape your mind.

This isn't just a one-time thing; you need to continually allow God to reshape the way you think about life, faith, yourself, and everyone around you.

Would someone please read Romans 12:2 for us? [Last time ☺, if this doesn't work for your group, you (or another adult) can read it.]

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. - Romans 12:2 (NLT)

We live in a world that is constantly bombarding us with messages. You may be surprised to learn that God is always speaking to you, too.

The challenging part is that you have to learn how to hear God's voice.

This second step is all about making space in your life to see and hear from God.

In fact, this second step is actually a lifetime of little steps-or THINGS-that you do every day.

We believe there are six THINGS all Christ-followers need to do to make space in their lives to see and hear from God.

THINGS is an acronym to help you remember what they are:

- T - time with God daily
- H - honest friendships
- I - intentionally connect with the church
- N - notice and serve others
- G - give to God
- S - share God-stories

We organized these six THINGS purposefully: the first three nurture your own soul, and the last three nurture others' souls.

The first three are also organized in expanding circles of relationships: you and God, you and a few others and God, you and a lot of others and God.

The last three are in order of how we've seen God work in our lives:

- We pay attention to the needs around us and respond to them
- We give what we have and who we are to God
- We share stories of God's work in our lives

There are a lot of things you can do to make space in your life to hear God's voice.

Over the next weeks, we'll be exploring these six THINGS that we believe can become part of setting a new direction for your life.

One final warning as we head into small groups: a lot of people confuse true, life-changing spiritual growth with doing the six THINGS we'll discuss in this series.

Real-life change is all about trusting God more and more every day, allowing the holy spirit to reorient your heart and renew your mind.

The six THINGS we'll be unpacking are great ways to do that, but if you're just going through the motions, you'll continue to feel hopelessly frustrated and stuck.

God wants a relationship with you; the six THINGS are simple ways to make space in your life for that relationship to grow.

But if you're not giving yourself fully to God as you practice these THINGS, they'll quickly become another "to-do" list of spiritual stuff that doesn't get down to the nitty-gritty of life with Jesus.

And you'll never experience the "rich and satisfying life" He wants you to have.

So, what will you do?

Remember, the decisions you make today shape who you'll become tomorrow.

Go have a great small group!

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you dream about most often?
2. What do you daydream about?
3. What are the main things you believe life is all about?
4. What (or who) shapes your heart? How would your friends answer that question about you?
5. What (or who) shapes your mind? How would your friends answer that question about you?
6. How would you describe your relationship with God right now?
 - I still make mistakes, but I'm totally committed.
 - I'm pretty committed, but I'm not sure I trust God with everything.
 - I play the game while I'm with church people, but I live like I want when I'm not.
 - I'm not sure if I even have a relationship with God.
 - I need to talk to someone about it.
 - Something else entirely.
7. What are some ways you make space to see and hear from God in your everyday life?
8. Which of the six THINGS are you the best at?
9. Which of the six THINGS are you the worst at?
10. Which are you most interested in learning about?